

44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion provides communications for Saber Strike

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Soldiers of 5th Signal Command's Charlie Company, 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion set up a network access point terminal in Pabrade, Lithuania to support U.S. Army Europe's Contingency Command Post for exercise Saber Strike 2013. (Photo courtesy 5th Signal Command)

PABRADE, Lithuania -- U.S. Army Europe's Contingency Command Post owes a large portion of its success in exercise Saber Strike to the Soldiers of 5th Signal Command's Charlie Company, 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion who provided communications support to the CCP for the multinational, multiservice exercise.

The roughly 2,000 personnel from 14 countries who took part in Saber Strike in May and June were spread out at locations in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, making good communications vital.

The command post exercise and computer-assisted exercises that were a highlight of Saber Strike took place in Lithuania and Estonia. For the widespread training, Soldiers from the 44th ESB provided the CCP with a connection for secure and nonsecure communications via an AN/TSC-93E tactical satellite system and AN/TTC-56 single shelter switch.

Charlie Company's 2nd Lt. David Bierbrauer said his team's task was to support the USAREUR CCP by providing reliable classified and unclassified network connections via the switch and satellite terminal.

Once the Soldiers established communications for the CCP, they began conducting additional training. One highlight was that the tactical satellite team was able to take advantage of an opportunity to cross-train with The U.S. Air Force Preventative Aerospace Medicine Team's bioenvironmental engineering, public health and independent duty medical technicians. The PAM Team used a Narda Probe to measure the amount of electromagnetic frequency emitted from the tactical satellite, based on the emitter's average frequency.

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The 44th ESB Soldiers also conducted training on a variety of technical and Soldier skills, including training on the classified and unclassified network Access Point Terminal and professional development classes on the Army Values, and planned and competed in a "Saber Challenge" fitness competition.

Saber Strike events also included some team- and relationship-building events, such as a "sports day" that pitted teams from the U.S., Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania against each other in basketball, volleyball and tug-of-war competitions as well as archery familiarization, and a "cultural day" trip to Lithuania's capital, Vilnius.

"I thought it was a really nice way to let everyone relax and interact with the other nations through the friendly competitions," said tactical satellite operator Pfc. Jamar Thompson. "It was also nice to get off the compound and enjoy the culture that Lithuania has to offer," he said.

"I think everyone got a lot out of this exercise," added Sgt. Maurice Felder, tactical satellite team chief. "From being able to take in the sights of a new country, to seeing how important our job really is in real-world Army operations, this exercise really helped the team as a whole."

Bierbrauer said he was proud of his team, who proved they could tackle the exercise and establish reliable communications for the CCP, while also taking on extra training above and beyond their mission.

"Above all they stayed motivated throughout the exercise," the lieutenant said. "Our mission would not have succeeded without the hard work and dedication of the great Soldiers that were a part of the team."

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